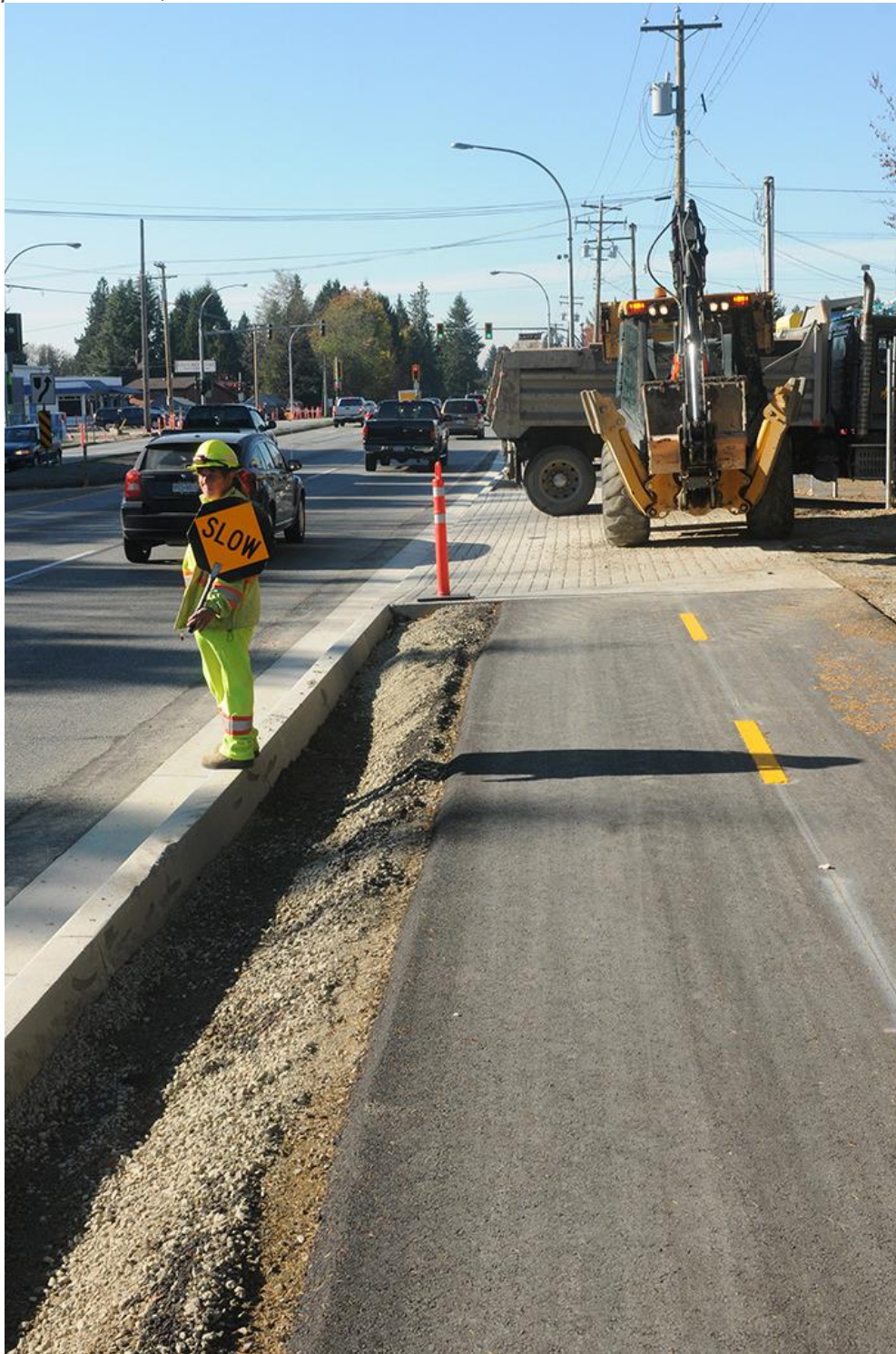


## ‘Make biking to work safer’

by [Neil Corbett - Maple Ridge News](#)

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The new bike lane on Lougheed Highway extends from 216th to Laity streets.  
— Image Credit: Neil Corbett/The News

More people would bike to work in Maple Ridge if they felt safer doing so, say local cyclists.

The problem is both the attitudes of motorists, and a lack of infrastructure to keep cyclists from sharing the roads with vehicles.

“You would be surprised how many people bike to work, and more people would,” asserts Barry Lyster, the owner of Local Ride Bike Shop.

He practices what he preaches, and rides to work every day, so he has a qualified opinion as he talks about the amount of traffic, the “nature” of that traffic, and its effect on cycling commuters.

“People are driving more aggressively, talking on cell phones and not paying attention, and that’s the reason most people don’t [bike to work].”

His wife, Nona Coles, cycles to the WestCoast Express and rides into Vancouver every day, and often complains about cars passing so close they almost brush against her.

“There are lots of times when you feel threatened, and people cut you off,” said Lyster.

Bike to Work Week in Vancouver is from Oct. 27 to Nov. 3. Vancouver has seen a 40 per cent increase in bike commuters since 2008, according to surveys by the cycle group HUB. It also found that urban commuters on bikes can make their trips in comparable times to vehicles

Lyster said improving traffic flow is critical to making cycling safer in Maple Ridge, along with more bike lanes and designated safe cycling routes.

That has been the [mantra of Jackie Chow](#), who represents HUB: Your Cycling Connection locally.

That organization seeks to improve cycling and advocate for cyclists. She explained Hub simply advocates cycling as an alternate means of transportation.

“What we’re hoping is that more people will bike. You don’t have to wear Lycra, you don’t have to have a road bike, and it doesn’t have to be fast.”

“I don’t like to call myself ‘an avid cyclist.’ I am from Holland – I cycle to get around.”

Chow has also literally feared for her life while cycling in Maple Ridge. One scary incident occurred on the Lougheed Highway, as she approached 224th Street. Chow will “take the

lane” – cycling in the middle of the road so as to avoid being hit by a driver in a parked car opening their door.

“I try to go at a good speed,” she said, but soon a van was driving perilously close behind her – too close to be able to stop if the driver had to. When the driver had an opening in traffic, he passed her, with “barely an inch to spare, and honking like crazy.”

The irate driver was stopped at the very next red light, and rolled down his passenger window to profanely tell Chow to get off the road.

In addition to that kind of invective, Chow has had pop cans thrown at her, and other Hub members have similar reports.

“Some people are not very nice.”

Compared with Europe, Canadian cities are not accommodating to cyclists, and change is slow.

“[Cycling infrastructure](#) here is always an afterthought,” she said.

In Maple Ridge, where there is no room for cyclists to be on the road, they are legally permitted to cycle on sidewalks with due care and attention. But this simply serves to force a cyclist to weave around garbage cans, trees, sandwich board signs and pedestrians.

“...You do need to make it not only safer, but also more convenient, more pleasant, more direct and more comfortable for people to convince them to hop on their bikes instead of in the car,” said Chow. “And the best way to do that is to give people on bikes, of all ages and abilities, their own, safe space on – preferably – separated paths, or otherwise on the road, but not on the sidewalk.”

Chow added that more can be done to promote combining cycling with transit. All TransLink buses have a bike rack in front, and they’re relatively easy to use. TransLink is now also starting to experiment with daily bike locker rentals, which will offer a lot more flexibility – currently they are only available for three-month leases. She hopes this will be successful, spread quickly, and come to Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows, as well. Once a new bike share organization gets off the ground in Vancouver, potentially next year, that will make combining transit with cycling even more convenient, said Chow.

She has a lot of ideas – where it is possible, [bike lanes should be placed](#) between sidewalks and parked cars, rather than between parked cars and traffic.

And, she would like to see a separate cycling and pedestrian master plan for Maple Ridge, as Pitt Meadows has done.

Pitt Meadows is great for cycling, and she said city hall continues to “chip away” at adding more bike lanes as it can. The dikes are also “wonderful for recreational cycling.”

Maple Ridge Coun. Mike Morden, on the cycling advisory committee, said district staff, as they plan the community, try to keep traffic moving and avoid bottlenecks for commuters, most who are leaving the community.

Where they can, they take advantage of funding for bike lanes offered by senior government, but members of the public are also critical of spending on this infrastructure, and he agreed the cost is “astronomical.”

He noted the bike lane from Laity Street to 216th is a \$1 million project.

“It’s part of trying to have east-west connectivity,” he said.

Morden noted there are now approximately 60 km of bike lanes in Maple Ridge.

“We’re having some successes.”